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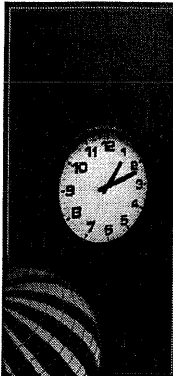
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Meet the Genovese Crime Family's New Boss Gang Land

BY JERRY CAPECI
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Less than a year after the death of legendary Mafia boss Vincent "Chin" Gigante, a cagy wiseguy who understands the wisdom of keeping a low profile has taken the reins of the powerful Genovese crime family, Gang Land has learned.

Meet Daniel Leo, 65, a reputed member of the violent, East Harlem-based Purple Gang during the 1970s who now resides in a \$2 million home in Rockleigh, N.J., a town on the Palisades that boasts the highest median household income in the state, according to the 2000 census.

There is scant public record on Leo, but several top law enforcement sources told Gang Land this week that he is currently at the pinnacle of the crime family whose members and rackets surpass all the others. The officials disagree about his title.

"We're carrying him as the acting boss," a law enforcement official who has been involved in several major investigations into the family's sophisticated labor racketeering schemes said.

Two other highly placed mob busters said they were not sure about Leo's official mob rank, but agreed that Leo is a low-key and "well-respected" family leader who has beaten the system. The lawmen agreed that in the wake of Gigante's death — and after the recent prosecutions of many top Genovese mobsters — no other family gangster now has more power and influence than Leo.

"Leo is a heavyweight, a major player, and he may be the acting boss, but we don't know for sure, yet," one source said. "This is the family that didn't tell the other four families for years that Chin was really the boss and that 'Fat Tony' Salerno was merely a figurehead."

All the sources do agree that Leo has served for many years as a top official in the crime family with little fanfare.

Leo, whose two-story brick house sits on a 1-acre plot on Rockleigh Road that in the 1980s was rich Colonial Dutch farmland, also owns a condominium in Boca Raton, Fla., according to real estate records. He did not respond to a call to his home for comment.

During the 1970s, according to a 1976 Drug Enforcement Administration report, Leo was a member of the Purple Gang, a loosely connected group of 127 drug dealers that includes dozens of gangsters from East Harlem and the Bronx who became Luchese and Genovese family mobsters, including Leo. The original 20-member East Harlem gang included several current Genovese mobsters, including capo Angelo Prisco.

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Leo suffered his only known arrest in 1980, when he was hit with a criminal contempt indictment for refusing to testify before a grand jury that was investigating loansharking, drug trafficking, and four murders, two in East Harlem and two in the Bronx.

Leo, who has used the names Leonelli and Leonardo, according to investigative reports, was found guilty at a bench trial the following year. His felony conviction on two counts was upheld on appeal, but he spent no time in prison, according to a docket entry about the case in Manhattan Supreme Court.

In October 1999, the FBI secretly listened in as Genovese capo Salvatore "Sammy Meatballs" Aparo described Leo's role in a recent Mafia induction ceremony that included Aparo's son, Vincent, and 14 other inductees. Leo assisted Lawrence "Little Larry" Dentico and Ernest Muscarella, who like Sammy Meatballs are currently serving federal prison terms for racketeering charges.

Aparo stated: "Larry, Emie and Danny conducted the induction. Danny was the individual who pricked the fingers and told them what to say during the ceremony," according to an FBI summary of the tape-recorded conversation that was obtained by Gang Land.

A year later, in October 2000, another capo, Alan "Baldy" Longo, glowingly described Leo and Dentico as close associates of Gigante who were running the family following Chin's racketeering conviction in 1997, according to an FBI report on that conversation.

"You got Danny Leo, you got Larry. ... A few other guys," Longo said. Chin "loves them," he said. "They're gentlemen. They got money. They're men and a half."

During the same conversation, Longo told mob turncoat Michael "Cookie" D'Urso that even though Chin and other family members were incarcerated, the family was in relatively good shape and "much stronger than the other families in the event there was a war," the report said.

"We got thirty, forty guys. Don't let anyone tell you that we're dead. Cause we're here," Longo said. He later pleaded guilty to racketeering and was sentenced to 11 years.

Longo and dozens of other wiseguys were ultimately convicted and jailed in large measure because of D'Urso's undercover work, but Longo wasn't just blowing smoke about the Genoveses during his rant, two top New York mob analysts say.

"The Genovese crime family is still the best organized, and has the deepest bench," said Daniel Castleman, the chief of investigations for the Manhattan district attorney, whose office has sent Genovese capos Alfonso "Allie Shades" Malangone, John "Johnny Sausage" Barbato, and Salvatore "Sally Dogs" Lombardi to prison in recent years.

"They continue to take part in traditional organized crime activities of gambling, loansharking and labor racketeering in New York and New Jersey," Mr. Castleman said.

"The Genovese family is the most secretive, criminally diverse, and powerful family in the country," the acting special agent in charge of the FBI's organized crime branch, FBI agent Michael Campi, said, noting that "the power stems from the control of unions and major industries."

Mr. Campi declined to comment about Leo's status, or that of another powerful capo, Tino Fiumara, who recently relocated to Long Island from the Garden State following his release

from prison nearly two years ago. Sources say Fiumara, 65, is a ready and willing contender for the top spot, but the prevailing wisdom is that he won't become a serious threat to reach for it until he concludes his federal supervised release in 13 months.

Mr. Campi would not identify any of the FBI's specific family targets, but made it clear that agents have their sights on other family members. Recent defections by mob lawyer-family associate Peter Peluso and soldier George Barone have provided considerable help to the feds, he said, "and will pose additional future problems to the power base of the Genovese family."

This column and other news of organized crime will be available today at ganglandnews.com.

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